

Two African kids who just started their new life in Las Vegas!

By Cassie Rice



In February 2010, my husband travelled to Uganda, a country in Eastern Africa and couldn't believe what he saw. Uganda is almost half-way around the world from Las Vegas. It is 11 hours ahead of us and is on the equator so there is a lot of humidity and almost always is at 80 degree temperatures.

He went to an orphanage (www.mlisada.com) where kids used their acrobatic and musical skills to help the orphanage make money and support hundreds of kids, but it was terribly poor and in need of so much. He called one day on his trip and said he wanted to adopt two kids to give them a

future. We began the process of adopting the two boys who were in that acrobatic troupe. The process was long, difficult and expensive, but the boys made it to the U.S. 5 days before Christmas, 2010. What a Christmas they had! We woke up finding one of the boys lying under the tree investigating all the presents. To them this was amazing, to me I would be amazed at the refrigerator, the pantry, having ice, garbage pickup, paved roads and emissions standards, but to them they were just so excited to have new things. In Uganda they each had just a few articles of clothing.

What a change in their life. The contrast between life in the United States and life in Uganda is not even comprehensible for most of our citizens. Basic human needs are not met in Uganda. Electricity, trash, health services, government, police, regulations etc all have big problems and are rampant with corruption.

White people (called Muzungus) are sought after by the local people for services or to purchase things mostly because those are the people who have money and most of the richest people who live there are part of charitable organizations (NGO's). Because of the lack of education, kids don't have a future that can amount to much. In Uganda there's no such thing as working harder and making a better life for yourself. The infra-

structure is such that it makes it near impossible to live a life that even the poorest people have here in the United States.

Our boys just started school here, have joined a soccer club and get to do gymnastics, hip hop and juggling. They went from no structure to the structure of our American kids. It has been a huge change and a big adjustment. It has been a big change for our family to go from two girls to two girls and two boys, but it is great to watch these kids experience for the first time, what all our kids take for granted.

My husband and I went to Africa as two regular people who wanted to help some kids who had a future with little hope and give them a chance at a real education and a life that may lead to them helping their country one day. There is such a large need in Africa, but we are at least giving two boys a chance at a changed life and for that they are very grateful. If you'd like to help out this orphanage, they are always looking for donations. Contact me at Gymcats@gymcats.com and I will let you know how you can help.

Cassie Rice is a world class gymnastics coach who lives in Henderson, NV and the proud mom of four children. Her articles appear frequently in ParentsGuide of Las Vegas.

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